HEALTHY
SMiLE
HAPPY CHILD

SONRISA
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Oral Health and Pregnancy

You may have heard that women can expect to lose a tooth for each child. Regular dental care and good oral hygiene and nutrition can ensure healthy teeth and gums during pregnancy. In addition, they can help you have a healthier baby!

Gingivitis

Many women notice that their gums bleed more easily during pregnancy. This is called pregnancy gingivitis and it is a type of gum disease. Gingivitis occurs in up to 75% of all pregnancies. It is caused by plaque and tarter on the teeth and it is made worse by the hormonal changes that occur while you are pregnant. Women who have pregnancy gingivitis need to have their teeth cleaned more frequently. Brushing and flossing are also important to maintain healthy teeth and gums. Some other warning signs of gum disease are a bad taste in your mouth, bad breath, red or swollen gums, tender gums, bleeding gums, loose teeth, sensitive teeth, pain when chewing, pus around teeth and gums, and tarter (brown, hard deposits) on tooth surfaces.

Premature, under weight babies

Another reason to take especially good care of your teeth and gums when you are pregnant is that recent studies are showing that moms with healthy teeth have healthier babies. Mothers who have gum disease have a greater chance of having a premature, underweight baby. Hormones play an important part in determining when labor starts. Infections in pregnant moms can upset the normal balance between the hormones and can cause premature labor and underweight babies. One study showed that pregnant mothers with severe gum disease are up to eight times more likely to have underweight, premature babies.

Tooth decay

Children whose mothers have a lot of untreated cavities, will also tend to have lots of tooth decay. Bacteria cause tooth decay. Babies are not born with the bacteria that cause tooth decay. They usually get it from their mother's saliva. Mothers with high levels of tooth decay causing bacteria have children who also have high levels of bacteria. The children then have a greater chance of having lots of tooth decay.

Dental Treatment

During pregnancy, many women have questions about the safety of having dental work done. The American Dental Association recommends that non-emergency dental care (except for teeth cleaning) be postponed during the first trimester and the last half of the third trimester of pregnancy. However, pain and infection should be treated right away,

no matter what trimester the pregnancy is in. Delaying treatment when an infection is present may be dangerous to the baby. It is best to avoid routine screening X-rays during pregnancy, but X-rays to identify or diagnose a specific problem can be safely done after shielding your abdomen with a lead apron.

Dental Visits

If you are planning a pregnancy, you should see a dentist if it has been over 6 months since your last visit. This is a good time to see that your gums and teeth are healthy and in good repair and to review brushing and flossing with your dentist or hygienist. If you are already pregnant, it is important to continue with regular appointments or to begin seeing a dentist if you have not been seen for regular checkups.